COHESION AND COHERENCE

Cohesion and coherence refer to the connection and development of ideas in your writing. With cohesive and coherent writing, you can guide your reader smoothly through your sentences, paragraphs, and paper as a whole.

COHESION

Cohesion refers to the connection of ideas from sentence to sentence. It deals with how your words and sentences link together.

TIPS FOR ACHIEVING COHESION

1. Start your paragraph with a topic sentence. A topic sentence sums up the main point of your paragraph.

2. Organize your sentences in a logical order. You can logically organize your sentence using three methods:

   a. Begin sentences with familiar information and end sentences with new information.
      Readers get familiar information from sentences they just read or from general knowledge. They prefer to see familiar, easy information before unfamiliar, complex information.

      Ex. In 2019, astronomers made history by photographing a black hole. They discovered the black hole at the center of a giant galaxy called Messier 87.*

      ● These sentences begin with familiar information that the reader would have from previous sentences or general knowledge. The sentences also end with new information that the reader would find unfamiliar or complex.

   b. Use transition words. Transition words add ideas together, indicate cause and effect, contrast ideas, emphasize ideas, and organize ideas

      ● Additive Words: additionally, also, furthermore, in addition, moreover, not only
      Ex. Texting while driving is against the law. Additionally, it is very dangerous.

      ● Cause and Effect Words: as a result, because, consequently, hence, therefore, thus, since
      Ex. Colin finished work early. As a result, he could join his brother for dinner.

Did you know that cohesion and coherence have the same etymological roots? Both terms come from the Latin co (“together”) and haerere (“to stick”) – combined, “to stick together”!
Contrasting Words: although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, nevertheless, on the contrary, unless, whereas, yet

Ex. Although it was raining outside, I decided to go jogging.

Emphasizing Words: for example, for instance, in fact, in other words, specifically

Ex. Elephants experience many human-like emotions. For example, they can feel compassion and grief.

Organizing Words: afterward, finally, firstly, lastly, previously, since, subsequently, then

Ex. Margot stayed up late to watch the hockey game. Afterward, she went to bed.

c. Repeat key terms and phrases. Reuse terms and phrases throughout sentences and paragraphs, especially if the reader is unfamiliar with those terms and phrases.

Ex. All coffee drinkers should try a cortado. A cortado is a Spanish beverage consisting of espresso topped with steamed milk. The combination of bitter espresso with creamy milk provides a delicious alternative to regular coffee.**

These sentences repeat key terms such as coffee, cortado, espresso, and milk.

3. End your paragraph with a concluding sentence. Your concluding sentence restates the main idea of the paragraph. It can also act as a lead-in for the main idea of the next paragraph, which creates a smooth transition between paragraphs.

** Coherence articulated as the connection of ideas in your paper as a whole. It deals with the logical development of your thesis and paragraphs.

TIPS FOR ACHIEVING COHERENCE

1. Create an outline before writing your paper.
   - Your outline should include a clear thesis and paragraphs that support your thesis.

2. Organize your paragraphs in a logical order.
   - Each paragraph should flow logically into the next.

3. Keep one idea to one paragraph.
   - All the sentences in one paragraph should relate to the main idea of that paragraph.

4. Create a reverse outline after writing your paper. See our “How to Create a Reverse Outline Resource” for further information.
   - After you finish your paper, open a blank document. Write your thesis statement and a one-sentence summary of each paragraph in the document.
   - If you struggle to summarize the main idea of a paragraph, you may have too many ideas in that paragraph. Try splitting the paragraph into two or more paragraphs.
● If a topic sentence differs vastly from your one-sentence summary of the paragraph’s main idea, you may need to revise that topic sentence.
● Once your reverse outline is complete, make sure that your paragraphs support your thesis and flow in a logical order.
